

New Jersey State Association



Copy to the Press

July 24th 1967

An open letter

Hon. Richard J. Hughes, Governor,
State House,
Trenton, N.J.

My dear Governor Hughes:

Within the past fifteen days, the citizens of a number of North Jersey Cities, has viewed with grim horror a series of racial disturbances that have resulted in a large number of violent deaths to men women and childrens alike, personal injuries numbering into the thousand, whole sale arrest and property damage estimated to be approaching to more than fifteen millions. Why?

The cities involved were, East Orange, Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Englewood, Elizabeth, New Brunswick and Plainfield. Now that the rioting has abated, the sound of shooting can no longer be heard, fires having been extinguished and the pogroms has set about the grim task of burying its dead, and treating the many wounded we might now find time if we are sensible enough to calmly sit down and earnestly and truthfully factually determine the cause.

The initial scene for these disturbances was set on July 8th in the wee hours of the morning when ten Black Muslims sat on a porch at 14th St. near 8th Avenue in the city of East Orange, and strangely enough nothing has been said in regards to the constant cruising of police cars from Newark, up and down the street, nor has any thing been said regarding the efforts of the Newark police in warning the merchants in the area to close their stores early that evening.

Now the question is was the cruising Newark police cars in the area on a complaint or was they they there constantly cruising with the desired purpose to taunt the conductors of these meeting and incite some disorder. It must be noted that not too long ago an alleged Muslim by the name of Washington, was arrested, tried and convicted for the slaying of Sgt. Connolly, of the East Orange police Department, in Newark, an attempt holdup of a Saving & Loan Association in which a policeman was shot, the Muslim headquartered on South Orange Ave, or Springfield Ave, Newark, was raided and reduced to a shambles. Is there any record of any white church Protestant or Catholic having ever been entered and treated in this fashion.

That which began in East Orange, on 14th street, spreaded to Newark proper a short time later as recorded by the incident in the arrest of one John Smith, a taxi-driver who was arrested on an insignificant charge of violation of the motor vehicle act, (tail-gating and passing on the right while operating a taxi-cab on Springfield Ave, in the city of Newark) (a thing that is a thousand times daily in Newark as well as many other cities thorough out the nation).

In this connection it is to be noted that the Press report had it that on being examined the was suffering from two broken or fractured ribs, inferring that he had been mishandled by the arresting officers. Police brutality having the object and of much concern among the minorities of this and other cities and it was just last January that I in follow up of a news paper item wrote the Presiding Justice of the Superior Court of Essex County, asking that he look into the matter of the Chief Magistrate Del Moura and the Prosecutor's office, for allowing a withdrawal of a complaint of Atrocious Assault and Battery, filed against a patrolman of the city of Newark, growing out of the firing of his service revolver into the car of a Negro resident of the city, and then fleeing the scene.

Much has been said on both side of the isle, regarding lawlessness, and it goes without saying that no one in his or her right mind can or should ever condone rioting or just plain lawlessness, however it must be concluded upon the basis of facts the scene to this disturbances was initiated by the over efficiency on the part of the police in their handling in the arresting of the taxi-driver, on the simple charge of a motor-vehicle violation. "his community having already hovering at fever heat needs only a spark to get it going.

Now we move into the town of Plainfield, just eighteen miles away where patrolman Gleason, is caught in an apparent clash between a white and "negro gang on Plainfield Ave, and was met with a horrible death, again I ask why? The story is the two gangs approaching the white turned possibly to retreat, the Negro gang attempted to pursue then patrolman Gleason firing his revolver struck William, a "negro youth seeing this the Negro es set upon the patrolman killing him, again general rioting, looting and property destruction became the order of the day, State Police and guardsmen are sent in to restore order.

It was then circulated that certain rifles had been stolen from a factory in near by Middlesex and demands was then made upon the Negro resident to turn in these stolen weapons not being forth coming the Governor Proclaimed a state of Emergency, as he claims under authority of Chapter 288-251 of the laws of 1942., However I think that the use and reference to this as the basis for his action was deceptive.

Chapter 251, of the Session Laws of 1942, according to its title, is quote

" An Act concerning civilian defense during the "war Emergency", and was enacted to prepare and aid New Jersey to cope with any emergency in dealing with any war connected situations and thus investing such power in the Governor in setting up civilian defense mobilizations, and no where in the said act, does it empower the governor, to issue any order to search and seize, or to search the homes of citizens without a warrant, as in this instance.

The Constitution of the United States Article Iv. as well as Article 1, Sec. 6, of the Constitution of the State of New Jersey are precise on this point regarding Search and Seizures in that they both says quote

" the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable search and seizures shall not be violated; and no warrant shall be issued but upon probable cause, supported by oath of affirmation and particularly describing the place to be searched or the thing to be seized."